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EVANGELIZING  
THE BASUTOS.

*The Rev.*  
*R. H. DYKE*  
*and his Work.*

*By the late*  
*Miss ANNIE R. BUTLER.*

Reprinted from "The Christian."

# BASUTOLAND MISSION.

(Paris Evangelical Missionary Society.)

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# EVANGELIZING THE BASUTOS.

Rev. R. H. Dyke and his Work.

BY THE LATE MISS ANNIE R. BUTLER.\*

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**F**ORTY years ago, one lovely summer evening at the writer's home in South Kensington, a visitor was announced—a young business man from Africa, son of the director of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society's Normal School at Morija, Basutoland. The forty-eight hours that had elapsed since his landing had been chiefly spent in sight-seeing, and he was weary enough to sit still quietly and enjoy a long talk. From this evening Robert Henry Dyke was no stranger in that home, but its ever welcome guest. He soon

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made other friends, too. His interest in philanthropic work brought about an introduction to Miss Annie Macpherson, and a letter of his to Basutoland, about her many enterprises, stirred up the practical interest of both missionaries and natives. Her monthly gatherings of workers at the Home of Industry became his great delight ; and at one of these, by Miss Macpherson's request, he gave an account of mission work among the Basutos. This was published in the *Chris'tian* (in 1872), and awoke the first chord of sympathy between England and Basutoland, the vibrations of which have never died away.

“ You should go to the Basuto Mission yourself,” said Miss Macpherson. “ You know the language ; so, as a missionary, you would have an advantage over others.” And, at one of the monthly meetings, her ambition for Mr. Dyke became the prayer of one of the workers. That prayer found at the time no echo

in his own heart. "I don't think it at all likely that I shall be a missionary, and I don't really wish it," was his thought as he rose from his knees, "my path in life seems to have been quite otherwise marked out." But he could not forget it ; and it was not very long before his own earnest desire and prayer were that he might be privileged to preach among the heathen "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The French Missionary Society accepted him as a candidate, and it was now arranged that he should go to Paris to pursue his theological studies.

He had had occasion to "prove" his mission armour before this—during a journey with Miss Macpherson to Canada, and the McAll work kept it bright during his stay in Paris. His examinations for the ministry being completed, he went to Glasgow for the benefit of a few months of medical training ; and then to Basutoland, where the failing health of his father, Mr. Hamilton Dyke, placed him at once at

the head of the Normal School at Morija. There, with the added charge of secretary to two hundred primary schools scattered over the country, he continues faithful unto this day.

“Is that distinctively mission work?” some may ask. Let us hear how the founder of the school answered that question:—

“To teach the coloured races, simply to make educated men of them, would certainly never be the aim of an intelligent missionary. But to teach with the aim of introducing them to an enlightened Christianity, to see in the school a branch of the Church, to work towards the same object as the latter has in view, to give the young as wide an education as possible, with the one idea in all that one does of forming a generation that shall serve the Lord—then, indeed, education is a distinctively missionary work. It is a preparation, not only for time, but for eternity.”

In 1859, a missionary had arrived in Basutoland about whom one feels that he was sent of God to answer that question. This young Swiss, M. Mabile, was full of fire and energy. With him to see a difficulty was to grapple with it. If there was no way of getting through a rock—well, he could walk over or round it! In any case, he was sure soon to be found on the other side. Thus, in 1863, not having a trained evangelist to send to a village that needed one, he chose out the holiest and most consistent Christian in his congregation and sent him. The plan answered, and it was decided at the yearly conference of the missionaries that, failing trained workers, seven such men as this should be placed out in needy spots.

The year 1864 brought the great Scotch missionary, Dr. Duff, to Africa, on a visit to mission stations. His stay in Basutoland marked quite an era in the work there, so helpful was his encouragement, so wise his counsel. "Place evangelists and teachers



everywhere," said he. "But we have none," replied the missionaries. "Then make them!" was his prompt rejoinder. And M. Mabile, in the midst of his already full life, promptly set to work to follow the advice. Thus, January, 1865, found him with a school of two boarders and three day-scholars—himself as head-master till another could be found to relieve him. The conference approved his action in this matter also; settled that the school should be located at their chief station, Morija; made other arrangements as to the buildings and teaching staff needed—and were then cut short in these and all other plans by the war that broke out between the Boers and the Basutos, which war lasted till, in 1868, the British nation took Basutoland under its protection.

The war over, M. Mabile said to his wife: "Shall we now start that Normal School?" (or the Central School, as it was called at first). "Certainly," replied she, "if you think well to do so." The



thing was done. The mission lay practically in ruins, but the scholars were lodged in the church vestries—where the Mabilles themselves had found refuge during the war—taught in the missionary carpentering shop, and fed on whatever a time of great scarcity and the kindness of ministering women could afford them. It was hard discipline for the independent and hitherto untutored Basuto lads. How one of them, now the staid pastor of a church, used to wish that the Boers would come back, scatter the school, burn all the books, and so put effectual end to the reign of law in the shape of hard work, punctuality, and rules of every kind !

After a year or so of the new experiment, the Normal School was officially taken over by the yearly conference, and M. Mabile was set free by the appointment of Mr. Hamilton Dyke to its directorship, with the help of another missionary, Dr. Casalis, son of one of the three young

missionaries who, in 1833, first claimed Basutoland for Christ.

There were twenty pupils in those days. There are 160 now, with room for 200. And of the 900 students who have entered the school, about one-third have passed into mission service. By 1875, so great had the call for teachers become, and notably from the Government, that the staff of the school resolved to make the training of teachers its one and special aim ; while M. Mabile started a second institution for the training of evangelists only. As before, he had no money for the enterprise, but, " Let us begin all the same," said he, " the Lord will provide." And through some of the Lord's stewards in Geneva, to whom he appealed, provision was made, and the Bible School became a reality.

The whole story of the French Basuto Mission is one of romance from beginning to end. The Bible School soon became, not only a training place for evangelists, but a missionary institution. Its students

hailed from various parts of Africa, many of them from the Transvaal, Bechuanaland, and the Orange Free State. But a few came from beyond the Zambesi, and these men went back to declare among their own people "the wonderful works of God." It is thus that the missionaries interpret the words, "Africa for the Africans." They feel that they themselves are few in number ; and that, if ever Africa is to be won for Christ, it must needs be through the Africans themselves. With this conviction, they began to take their converts with them on itinerating tours, and to seek to awaken and train their missionary instincts, even though the systematic teaching which was needed to supplement their labours was then an impossibility.

In Mr. Dyke's work at the Normal School, as in these other institutions, Christian teaching and principles take a foremost place ; and, as all the pupils are boarders, they hourly come under this influence. Only those who know the

adverse current of their home lives, tending to draw them away from all that is good, pure, and holy, can duly appreciate the need of constant drilling in Christian truth and life.

That there is encouragement among the students, their Y.M.C.A., Scripture Union, Missionary Auxiliary, Student Volunteer Committee, and village itineration would suffice to prove. In 1909, a visit of Mr. O. Bull, one of Dr. J. R. Mott's colleagues, stirred them up to fresh spiritual life and effort. They decided to spend their holidays in a regular missionary raid upon other young men of the Basuto race ; and, travelling far and wide—some as far as the sources of the Orange River, four or five days' journey away—they came back in a few weeks to tell of about twenty new branches of the Y.M.C.A.

Let us summarise a few of the changes since, eighty years ago, Moshesh, king of the Basutos, sent for missionaries, " men of peace," to come to his country. Then,

heathenism and gross ignorance reigned, and even cannibalism was to be found. There are now in Basutoland day-schools with 300 teachers at work. Seventeen fully qualified native pastors are to be found there in the charge of churches, while 210 mission stations are cared for by evangelists. "As for the evangelists," writes an isolated missionary's wife, "those of this district are real helps and friends to us, and show a marked contrast by their behaviour, and their way of thinking and speaking, with the very heathen population of this corner of Basutoland. While near them we do not feel lost or alone, for we know we have around us men upon whom we may rely, and who are devoted to the work of God."

Of the faithfulness of the workers results speak, 2,100 conversions having been reported at the April Conference, 1910, as the ingatherings of one year. Out of a population of 400,000 Christianity now claims 100,000 direct or indirect adherents,

and of these 4,500 have joined the Scripture Reading Union. Material signs of progress are not wanting. One sees houses with roofs and windows, instead of round mud huts, and trees in place of barren waste—that last being a literal fulfilment of Isa. xxxv. 1, 2, for there were no trees in the country when the missionaries came !

The Christian Basutos have learned to give. This is looked upon by them as an essential of church membership, and £4,000 a year is contributed by them for the upkeep of the Mission. But more than that is needed. The Paris Missionary Society can do nothing now financially beyond the support of its own European missionaries. The withdrawal of State aid from the Churches of France, and the recent acquisition by France of new colonies, have thrown crushing responsibilities upon the Society and its friends. It is for Britain to supplement the needs of Basutoland. Sir Godfrey Lagden, Resident Commissioner of Basutoland, bears

equally warm witness to the missionary labours. "During my seventeen years in Basutoland," he says: "I became closely associated, not only with the missionaries themselves, but with their actual work; and I do not believe that any mission society is more deserving of our support and encouragement."

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For the support of the evangelists and native pastors, and the maintenance of the native work, £5,000 a year is required. The converts can, with the greatest difficulty, make up £4,000 a year, so they must be assisted in their noble effort, and British Christians are doing something towards this; but at least £400 a year is still required to put the work into a state of efficiency. Communications relative to the work may be sent to Mr. P. S. Badenoch, "Mildmay," Belmont Road, Reigate.



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